

# SIGNAL STRONG

## IMPROVING U.S. COMMUNICATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

By Sgt. Bethany Witherington

The 220th Engineer Installation Squadron is an Air Force Engineering Installation (E&I) team whose mission is to engineer and install reliable, sustainable communications systems in support of the warfighter throughout the Afghanistan.

E&I is responsible for designing various types of communications systems from radio, cryptographic, cable and airfield navigational systems. The team uses existing base infrastructure to support improved communications.

The Technical Control Program they support helps expand the command and control communications systems for theater operations. The

completed projects are in synchronization with the rest of the communications operations in country.

The enhanced communications that our cable upgrades provide will provide better data and voice systems.

While here at Bagram, one of biggest success stories for the team was the combining of various Army, DISA and Air Force operations. By uniting the customers, the team was able to coordinate requirements and combine resources to provide a secure pathway for critical circuits coming onto the base.

“Completion of this project corrected a deficiency that existed

since 2009 when several cable lines were cut and damaged from mortar attacks” said Master Sgt. Michael Zinsmeister.

Since their arrival, the E&I team has installed over 40,000 feet of fiber for the internet communications.

The E&I team is currently tasked to the 228th TTSB. Individuals deploy in six month rotations using personnel from three different E&I squadrons. E&I teams are currently deployed throughout the CJOA; the main management team is located here at BAF.

E&I teams have completed two six month rotation and are scheduled to be in theater until May 2012.



Photo taken by Sgt. Bethany Witherington

From left to right: Staff Sgt. Kyu Lee, Master Sgt. Michael Zinsmeister, Tech. Sgt. Justin Ross, Chief Master Sgt. Mark Poole, Staff Sgt. Marcus Miller, Lt. Col. James Loux, Capt. Santana Freeman, Capt. Christopher Treff, Chief Master Sgt. Francis Melchert and Maj. Steven Dudash pose for a picture on a deck the E&I Air Force Team built, after arriving at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan.

# INSIGHT FROM HHC COMMANDER

*By Capt. Sean Maly*

First, I would like to relay to all the folks back home my thanks for all their support. Our FRG group is rolling along and providing feedback to the families.

Here we are, May 14th almost exactly 3 months into our deployment. Looking back at our long road, we have completed numerous soldier tasks, civilian training, weapons ranges and medical screening.

We've had to endure blistering summer heat and frigid wet winter cold. Our soldiers have had to complete last minute tasks under timed pressure and then the army standard of "Sit and Wait" on tasks to be assigned. Many call it the extremes of deployment, but most of us realize it is normal reality of deployment.

Currently, we are well into our

mission. Once a unit settles in and adequately learns their responsibilities and requirements, they hit a pace called, "Steady State." It's a nice army term meaning, everything has settled down into a routine.

Our leaders have reorganized their staff, their buildings and their schedules and come to a high level of efficiency.

May has marked the point and time were the 228th has established themselves and set the bar for success.

I still maintain that South Carolina has the finest soldiers who always work hard and do the right thing. We will continue in our mission and I am committed to bringing everyone back home safe and sound.



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## FROM 1ST SGT'S BUNKER: TRAINING IN A WAR ZONE

*By 1st Sgt. Kenneth Green*

As I reflect upon the last eight months of preparation for mobilization, the mobilization station and the ultimate deployment to Afghanistan, I am in awe of the sheer dedication and determination our Soldiers and leaders have shown as they worked to accomplish their given tasks. Our success was due in large part to the tremendous amount of prior preparation and unit training.

It is the latter of these two successes, training, that I will focus on here. Ironically as it may seem in a combat zone our focus on training does not end. Be it

MOS cross training, weapons safety, physical fitness, or battle drill training, we all must remain diligent in our commitment to ensuring training is a top priority so we do not lose those skills critical to overall mission success. As the old saying goes, if you don't use it you will lose it; and this is not the place where we should let down our guard.

In addition to fine tuning military skills, I would encourage Soldiers to seek opportunities to refine those skills needed for success in their civilian careers during their down time. Here at Bagram, we are fortunate to have

a variety of on-site resources available to help.

It is only through continued training and re-training we put ourselves in a forward moving position to do better for ourselves and those around us. Don't let this opportunity pass us by without making the most of it.



## Chaplain's Corner

**We are well into our tour now. At about this point, as routines are well established, we can sometimes find some boredom starting to creep in. We each need to find those interest which will keep us occupied if you see that happening to you. HHC and PAO have done a great job at sending out the MWR information. Beyond MWR activities, this is the time to work on personal growth goals. This may include educational goals, or even personal goals such as learning to play the guitar. It may take a little effort, but now is the time to pursue these interest.**

**It is great to see many of our 228th soldiers at various worship services here at BAF. Most of these services also have opportunities for volunteers, whether it is with the praise teams as singers or musicians or even as audio visual personnel. The key is to get involved.**

**By now most people know where our office is located, please stop in to see us. We constantly receive care packages and if you need items check with us before you buy them. We get snacks, hygiene products, socks, etc. all in from time to time so check with Sgt. Moore, if we don't have it he can usually find it.**

**~Chaplain (LTC) Eric Turner**



## Volunteers in a War zone

Sgt. Stewart Moore, Chaplain Assistant, volunteers twice weekly in the evenings to help pack and distribute care packages for Operation Care. He is the 228th unit representative responsible for securing packages sent by various non-profit organizations from the states to Afghanistan.

To date, he has been responsible for the arrival of care packages that included socks, drink packages, winter hats, pencils, writing pads, blankets, hygiene items, microwave popcorn and more. Once he receives items, he sorts them based on a needs priority.

Operation Care is a 100% volunteer organization comprised of military and civilian members serving in Afghanistan, dedicated to the welfare of both the people of Afghanistan and International Security Assistance Forces.

Operation Care is based at Bagram Air Field and works to supply servicemen on remote forward operating bases (FOBs) and local Afghan woman and children with essential hygiene items, books, nutritional supplements and similar items from a multitude of sources.



# S1 Spotlight Soldier:

## *Military Training Saves a Civilian's Life*



Photo taken by Army Capt. Karena Hill

*By Capt. Karena Hill*

In an instant, Sgt. David Middleton was faced with a life altering decision that would literally affect the life of an unknown individual. He and four fellow guardsmen were blissfully ridding on the commuter train from Boston to Ft. Devens Massachusetts, normally an uneventful 50 minute ride from the city. This ride however would turn out to be anything but uneventful.

Midway through the trip, Sgt. Middleton and his fellow guardsmen looked up to see a disheveled looking man wearing no shoes or socks in the dead of winter. Seconds later a visibly shaken female assistant conductor yelled "Oh my God, he jumped".

All at once, there was the undeniable sound of several tons of steel screeching to a halt from

50 mph to nothing; the conductor looking through the now opened door saying "I have a body to look for"; and the shocked expressions from passengers buckled in their seats wondering what to do now?

It was at that moment that the Soldiers knew they couldn't sit by idly in their seats and do nothing. They began asking how they could provide aid to the man who had just fallen from the moving train. In the absence of readily accessible emergency personnel, paramedics were 45 minutes away from the sight of the scene, they offered their assistance. Although hesitant to allow them to leave the train at first, the conductor allowed them to get off and provide aid after learning that all four Soldiers were certified First Responders as a result of training received from the National Guard.

Once off the train, they ran a quarter of a mile to reach the man. They found him lying near the train tracks snoring and unconscious. Although his heartbeat was faint, he was alive. The Soldiers removed their outer garments to protect the man who was wearing only a pair of jeans, a T-shirt and thin jacket and waited along his side until the paramedics arrived and transported him to the hospital.

Fast-forward- The unidentified man in this story survived. Two weeks after the incident, the man's family contacted the Soldiers individually in letters of appreciation for their acts of kindness that quite possibly saved the man's life. He came out of his comma on Christmas Day 2010, a true miracle to him and his family. Doctors believe his long term prognosis is good and that one day he will be able to do all the things he could do prior to the accident. The family is unsure why the man jumped, but are elated that he survived to be reunited with his wife and children.

As for Sgt. Middleton, his heroic act of kindness was rewarded by the South Carolina Army National Guard with an ARCOM and letter of appreciation from his command.

# S2:

## Teamwork Essential to Mission Success

By Maj. Barbara Mesaros

Since our arrival in Afghanistan, the S2 has hit the ground running and will go into a full sprint in the next few weeks. As most of you know, just a few weeks before our mobilization, we received news that our NCOIC was unable to deploy. It was a big blow to our small section of three.

As luck would have it, the great State of South Carolina did not let us down. In January, we received an outstanding replacement that was born for the challenge. SSG Monica Rogers answered the call of her country and reported with only one month of preparation time. SSG Rogers has been a godsend to this unit and is the quintessential leader.

Also answering a call to a challenge is our Intelligence Analyst, Spc. Blaine. Upon arrival in theater we discovered that there wasn't a daily intelligence summary that covered the CJOA. We were determined to create such a product so that our Brigade as well as the Battalions in other Regional Commands would have situational awareness on the threat. Spc. Blaine spearheaded the project. As of today, the Task Force Spartan Daily Intelligence Summary (DISUM) has over 160 subscribers in four countries.

In addition to being exceptional Intelligence Analysts, both SSG Rogers and Spc. Blaine have a number of other interests and goals. Spc. Blaine has started a garden in the HQ break area that includes hanging tomato baskets, okra, peppers and flowers. SSG

Rogers loves physical training and works out a couple times per day. Additionally, as if that wasn't enough to fill their day, they are both working on their Bachelor's Degrees.

The S2 continues to focus on Physical Security and Operation Security to ensure that we do not become our own worst enemy. Everyone in the brigade is responsible for our safety. If you see something posted on a Social Network that shouldn't be there, please let us know immediately so we can take steps to have it removed.

"Signal Ready, Signal Strong"



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## OPSEC Checklist Reminder

- \* Be vigilant. Never become complacent when it comes to OPSEC
- \* Be Alert
- \* Be Careful
- \* Be sure to shred or burn all office papers
- \* Protect critical Information
  - \* Detailed information about the mission
  - \* Details on locations and times of unit deployments
  - \* References to trends in unit moral or personnel problems
  - \* Details concerning security procedures
- \* Remember: OPSEC is a family affair- discuss OPSEC with your family

*YOUR ARE A VITAL PLAYER IN OUR SUCCESS!*

# Safety Tips:

## Electrical Safety Reminders

By Capt. Ron McKimmy- CJTF-101 Safety

Electricity is everywhere around us. We see it everywhere in the world in which we live. Electricity has become a part of our modern way of life and something we take for granted. It is in our homes, vehicles, computers and cellular phones. We live and work in varied conditions throughout Afghanistan and sometimes it is easy to forget just how dangerous electricity can be. If the right conditions occur, electricity can kill. There are other hazards associated with electricity. Not only can it kill you, electricity can shock, burn, damage equipment, and ignite combustible materials causing fires.

You must respect electricity. Using caution when dealing with electricity is important. Electricity can cause burns to the same extent as if you were burned with fire. Electrical shocks can damage tissue and nerve endings below the surface and internally. Electricity can permanently damage body tissue and leave you crippled for life. The biggest hazard is electrocution (death).

Education is the best way to prevent electrical accidents.



Left, Photograph taken in Kunduz, where A Co 151 is located. Their laundry building burned as a result of a power surge resulting in a spark that completely destroyed the building. No Soldiers were harmed as a result of the fire.

***Don't Let This Happen to You-*** General Electric Safety Reminders:

- \* Never overload electrical outlets
- \* Assume that all overhead wires are energized at lethal voltages.
- \* Never touch a fallen overhead power line.
- \* Stay at least 10 feet from overhead wires
- \* If an overhead wire falls across your vehicle while driving, stay inside the vehicle
- \* Never operate electrical equipment while you are standing in water
- \* Never touch a fallen overhead power line.
- \* ***MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL:*** Always use caution when working near electricity.

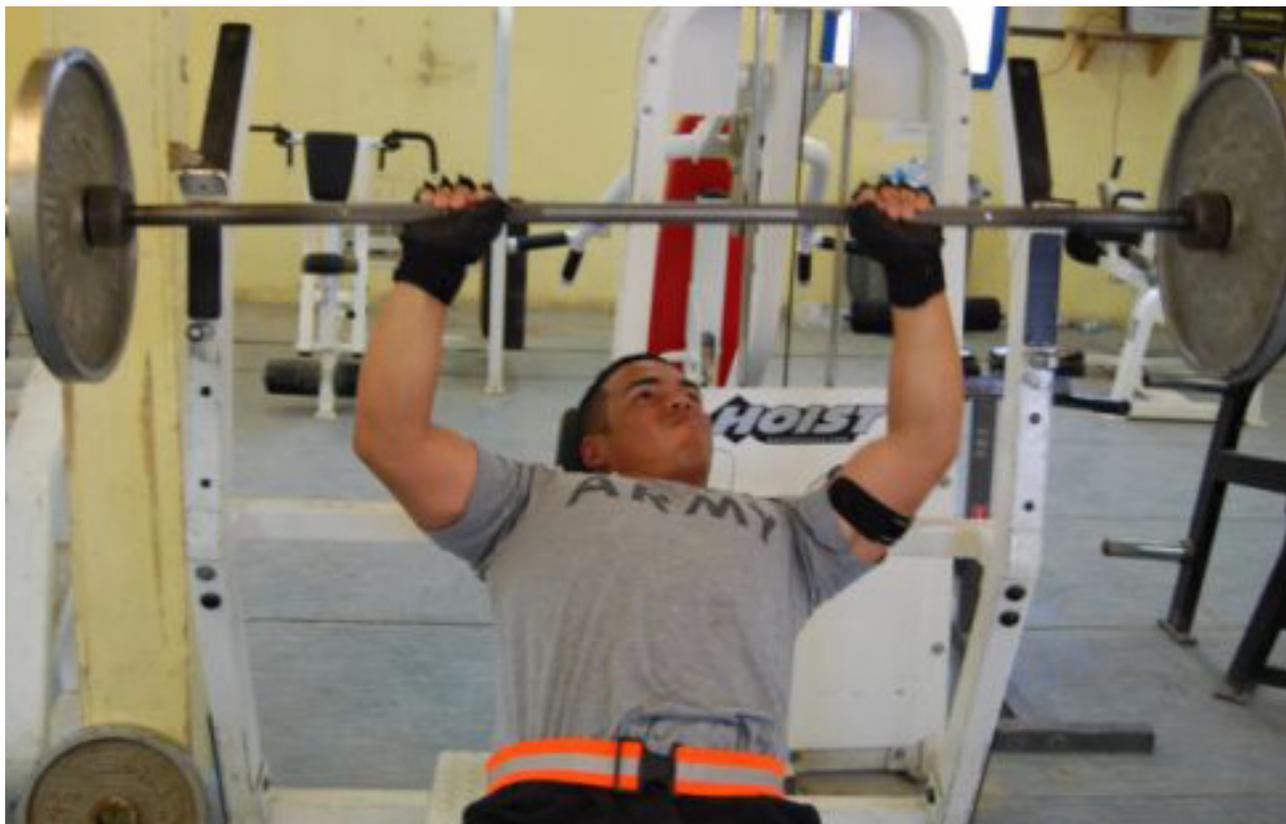


Photo taken by Army Sgt. Bethany Witherington

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## Ways Soldiers Pass Time On A Deployment

*By Sgt. Bethany Witherington*

During a deployment, in spite of long work days, they still manage to find creative ways to occupy themselves so they do not become bored.

Warrant Officer Lewis McMahan, Contracting Officer Representative said, "He attends MWR country night to help time pass quickly.

Others enjoy spending their time playing cards and associating with other service members. It provides Soldiers the opportunity to release the constant stress of being in a combat zone.

Soldiers have been doing home improvements in their rooms to maximize space and to fill the time with something constructive. "Lifting a bed and building a shelf under the bed for clothes is time consuming. It is not something that can be done in one day," said

McMahan.

Soldiers here have been able to adapt and make it like home for them. Some Soldiers have bought items to dress up their room, while others have brought things from home.

Sgt. 1st Class Carla Walker, Judge Advocate Senior Paralegal brought a picture of the vehicle that she will purchase when she returns home." The picture provides Walker with daily motivation and a goal to achieve upon completion of her deployment.

Communications Satellite Operator, Spc Gary Colon said if he is not at the gym working to improve his physical fitness, he can be found researching the stock market in the Wall Street Journal or on online websites.

Regardless of their location throughout the world, Soldiers

have proven themselves apt at finding ways to create a sense of continued optimism and resiliency in spite of the fact they are located thousands of miles away from friends and family for an extended period of time.

# Just for the fun of it... Sometimes being silly is a requirement of war



To see more photos  
please visit the unit flickr  
site at: [www.flickr.com/  
photos/228ttsb](http://www.flickr.com/photos/228ttsb)

Left, from left to right, Sgt. Ricky Peterson, Sgt. David Middleton, 2nd Lt. Lori Williams and CPL Michael Skinner give an all thumbs up indicating that they have been accounted for after a 100% mandatory Soldier head count. .



Above, Sgt. 1st Class Lousia Blanchard, Enterprise Day Team Leader, peeks her head out carefully checking for traffic before crossing the street.

Below, Sgt. Reuben Macfie, who works in the Enterprise section, take a moment away from his desk job to enjoy a singles game of paddle ball.



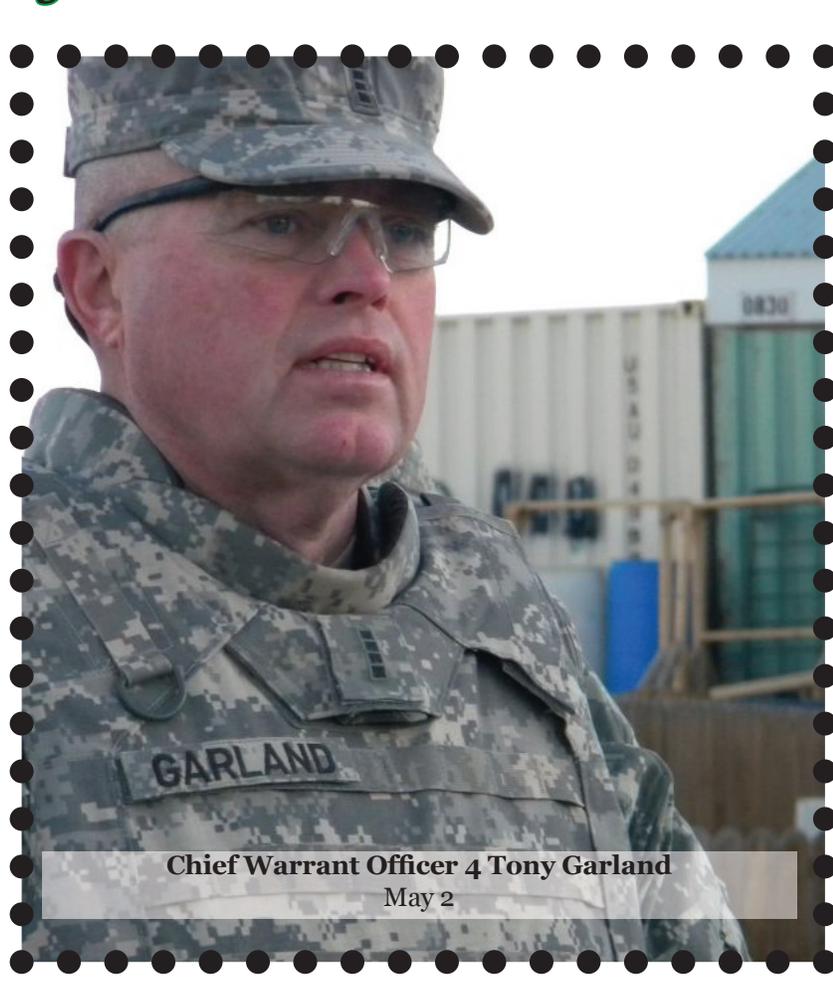
Above, LTC Tim Sellers, JNCC-A Director, relieves a little stress on a very puzzled looking Chief Warrant Officer 3 Raymond Brown from the Engineering section.



# May Birthday Celebrations



**Sgt. Aldous Copeland**  
May 16



**Chief Warrant Officer 4 Tony Garland**  
May 2



**Capt. Ryan Causey**  
May 21



**Sgt. Eric Bamberg**  
May 6



**Master Sgt. Timothy Wood**  
April 9  
\* Happy Belated\*

*Birthdays are feathers in  
the broad wing of time*  
~Jean Paul Richter



**Maj. Preston Gee**  
May 31



**Sgt. Bethany Witherington**  
May 19



**Staff Sgt. Monica Rogers**  
May 7



**Staff Sgt. Barry Allen**  
May 29



**Chief Warrant Officer 2  
John Boatwright**  
May 20



**Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Wickum**  
May 18

# Highlights from the Month of May ~~~~~



Lt.Col. Tim Sellers, JNCC-A Director, gives Maj. Gen. Tim McHale a tour of the operations section.



Welcome to Maj. Will Parks and 2nd Lt. Gary Holloway on their arrival to Bagram!



Photo taken by Army Sgt. Bethany Witherington

Staff Sgt. Helge Krebs, Sgt. Guido Groegerchen and Spc. Andre Jungblut of the German Army receive guidon for their hard work assisting Task Force Spartan while serving at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan.



Congratulations to Sgt. 1st Class William Coker on the April 22nd birth of his sec-